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Hunt underway for facilitators after FC HQ attack

• Three personnel martyred repulsing assault during morning assembly; all assailants swiftly gunned down • First attacker detonated himself at entrance to clear path for accomplices; state media says all three were Afghan nationals • KP CM visits the injured at Lady Reading Hospital; president denounces bombing, PM lauds forces for 'timely action'

By Umer Farooq

PESHAWAR: Investigators and intelligence agencies are hunting for facilitators and support networks behind an attack on the Federal Constabulary headquarters here on Monday, which saw three personnel embrace martyrdom and 12 sustain injuries.

The attack, which began after a suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance to the FC headquarters, was swiftly repulsed as personnel engaged and shot his two accomplices dead before they could enter the installation to inflict any major damage.

The three attackers ostensibly planned to target the FC's weekly assembly near the main gate on Sonehri Masjid Road, where around 400 personnel had gathered.

Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Dr Mian Saeed Ahmad said three militants tried to attack the headquarters in the morning. The first blew himself up at the main gate, while two others managed to enter the premises.

However, snipers and the armoured personnel carrier (APC) engaged the remaining bombers, restricting them to a parking lot reserved for motorbikes, he said, adding that the bombers sustained injuries in precise shots fired by the snipers and personnel from the APC.

Initial investigations revealed that the bombers had been waiting to carry out the attack. They reached the area at 7:35am while they executed the attack at 7:50am, the official said, hinting at a possible security breach that was the focus of their investigation.

"The bomber can be seen in the area at around 7:35am; the question is why did he take at least 25 minutes to carry out the attack despite the fact that he had passed the main gate twice — once while riding on a motorbike and then on foot," a senior official said, fearing possible 'facilitation' from inside the headquarters.

CCTV footage showed the first suicide bomber, clad in a chador, approaching the main gate and blowing himself up, clearing the path for his accomplices, who were waiting at a distance. These bombers had arrived on a

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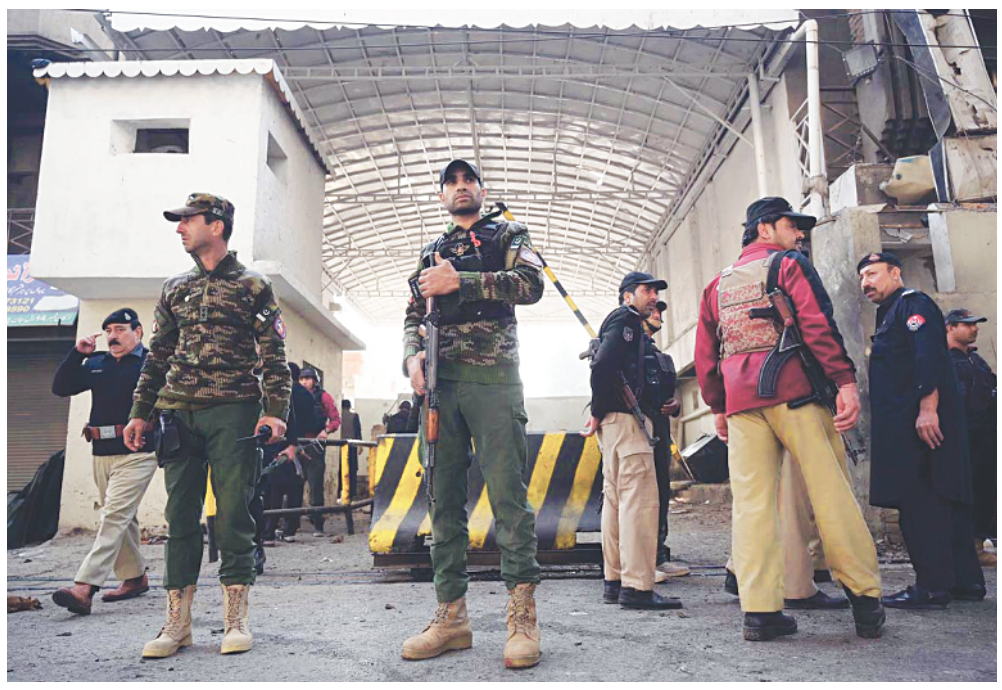

SECURITY personnel stand alert outside the FC headquarters following a suicide attack.—APP

Outfit behind Police Lines attack rears its head again

By Manzoor Ali in Peshawar

THE proscribed Jamaatul Ahrar (JuA) has reared its head again in Peshawar, two years after perpetrating a major attack on the city's police headquarters.

Though Monday's attack hasn't been claimed by the terror outfit so far, observers point to social media chatter that indicates JuA was involved.

A similar suicide attack targeting Peshawar police in January 2023, which claimed more than 80 lives, was also claimed by the JuA.

These recent attacks show that the militant outfit has retained its deadly reach, despite the mysterious killing of its leader, Abdul Wali aka Omar Khalid Khorasani, in a car bomb attack in August 2022 in Afghanistan. Khorasani had formed this outfit in 2014 after his split from the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, but both groups joined hands in 2024.

Sweden-based security researcher Abdul Sayed, who studies armed groups in South and Central Asia, told *Dawn*

Ash cloud from African volcano hits ME air routes

• Plume reaches 45,000 feet, placing hazardous glass particles squarely in cruising altitude of long-haul jets • Toxic cloud drifts across Yemen and Oman; Pakistan and India brace for impacts

Dawn Report / Monitoring Desk

ADDIS ABABA: A massive volcano in northeastern Ethiopia erupted for the first time in tens of millennia, releasing a dangerous ash plume that has drifted across the Red Sea and disrupted operations on one of the world's busiest air routes.

The eruption of Hayli Gubbi, located in the volcanically active Afar region, sent a column of ash and smoke rising nearly 45,000 feet (14 kilometres) into the atmosphere.

The volcano is located about 500 miles (800 kilometres) northeast of Addis Ababa, near the border with Eritrea. It sits within the East African Rift, where tectonic plates are slowly moving apart.

By Monday, the plume had spread east over Yemen and Oman and was tracking toward the airspace of Pakistan and India, forcing airlines to cancel flights or fly costly detours.

Extraordinary awakening

Local Ethiopian media reported that the explosion caused tremors felt as far away as Djibouti and plunged surrounding settlements into darkness.

Authorities in Ethiopia's Afar region have not yet released details about possible injuries, deaths, or property damage.

Officials and experts described the event as one of the most extraordinary volcanic awakenings in the region's history. There is no evidence the volcano had erupted in more than 10,000 years, scientists said.

Simkin Carn, a volcanologist and professor at Michigan Technological University, stated that there is no evidence the volcano had erupted at any time during the Holocene period — the last 11,700 years since the previous major ice age.

"Hayli Gubbi has no record of Holocene eruptions," Carn wrote on the social media platform Bluesky.

Reports from the ground in Ethiopia indicated the eruption continued for several hours on Sunday. Footage posted on social media showed a tall column of pale smoke rising from the area, while satellite imagery revealed a wide ash plume spreading across large sections of the Horn of Africa.

The fallout extended quickly into the Arabian Peninsula.

Air traffic affected

The trajectory of the ash cloud presents a significant challenge for South Asia. The Toulouse Volcanic Ash

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PML-N bags most votes in by-elections

• Ruling party secures 82pc votes in PA polls, 64pc in NA constituencies • ECP withholds victory notification of minister's brother

By Amjad Mahmood and Iftikhar A. Khan

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: As it emerged victorious in all the seats, the ruling PML-N secured close to 64 per cent of the total votes polled in the by-elections for six National Assembly constituencies held on Sunday.

Five constituencies were located in Punjab and one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These seats, except for one, were vacated due to the disqualification of the opposition PTI MNAs.

The PML-N bagged 564,400 votes out of a total 883,108 or 63.91pc of the votes cast for the six National Assembly seats. In a surprising outcome, the PML-N also snatched from the PTI the NA-18 seat (Haripur, KP) against all expectations. Political analysts had been hoping that at least this seat would be retained by the PTI because of certain factors, including that KP is being ruled by the PTI, so there were minimal chances of rigging in the constituency.

Former opposition leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub's wife was contesting against little-known Babar Nawaz Khan of the PML-N.

Likewise, the PML-N clinched from the PTI the NA-129 (Lahore-XIII) seat, vacated after the death of MNA Miaz Azhar, former Punjab governor and father of PTI leader Hammad Azhar. Mr Azhar's nephew Arsalan was facing PML-N's Hafiz Nauman here. Both represented the Arain clan, which constitutes the majority of the voters in the constituency.

The PML-N won six out of seven Punjab Assembly seats in the province by securing 82.41pc of the polled votes. About the seventh seat, it had

Hollow victory: Editorial on Page 6

not fielded its candidate in PP-269, Muzaffargarh, against PPP nominee Alamdar Qureshi. The PML-N bagged 327,087 votes out of 396,879 votes cast for six Punjab Assembly seats.

"Now the PPP cannot blackmail the PML-N for the passage of the annual federal budget," Dr Rashid Ahmad Khan, former head of Punjab University's Political Science Department, told *Dawn*, referring to the simple majority the PML-N would attain in the National Assembly after grabbing the six NA seats.

Discussing the factors about the defeat of the PTI in NA-18, he said the voters were alienated, believing that when their ballots were not "honoured" in the 2024 general elections, it would serve no purpose this time either. Also, it became clear that the PTI leadership without Imran Khan was unable to mobilise supporters, he added.

Endorsing his views, Pakistan Study Centre Director Dr Amjad Magsi said that the PTI leadership was not clear-headed and failed to fully run the election campaign, while the lack of its traditional election symbol also played a role in the defeat. He said the

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FCC rejects challenge to CB decision on judges' transfer

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Monday dismissed for non-prosecution a set of intra-court appeals filed by five Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges against the now-defunct Supreme Court's constitutional bench decision to uphold the transfer of three judges to the IHC.

While the sitting IHC judges also filed a miscellaneous petition on Saturday contesting the shifting of their intra-court appeals from the apex court to the newly established FCC and demanding that the matters be returned to the SC as they constitutionally fall within the apex court's jurisdiction, there was no occasion to hear the miscellaneous plea after the main ones were dismissed for non-prosecution.

The IHC judges who had earlier approached the SC against the constitutional bench decision and later contested the shifting of their challenge to the newly created FCC

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ON OTHER PAGES

Rs25 billion package for Karachi roads

Acknowledging the extensive damage caused by recent heavy rains to the road infrastructure, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday approved a plan presented by Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab and announced a Rs25 billion special package for the city. Sources said the special grant to overhaul the city's road infrastructure would soon be placed before the provincial cabinet for formal approval. **Page 13**

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